

G.C.S. TRIP

I like to consider myself a loyal member of our national association, G.C.S.A.A., so a couple of years ago when they recommended we use a particular airline for conference travel I did so willingly. This year they made arrangements for us to have access to a travel agency to handle all the mundane tasks of lining up air transportation for "Vegas". Now my loyalty was put to the test. I contacted this travel agency, told them where I was leaving from, when I was leaving, and when I was coming back, and requested two tickets, one for me and one for my wife. The fun now begins. When I received the tickets they were both in my wife's name, I quickly told them that if only one of us can go to "Vegas" it was going to be me. No problem, just scratch out her name and write in mine.

The travel agency decided that the best way for us to get from O'Hare to Las Vegas was by way of Minneapolis/St. Paul. So when I received the tickets, it showed us going from O'Hare to Minneapolis then to Las Vegas, our return tickets simply said Las Vegas to O'Hare. Okay, I can handle one stop over in Minnesota, after all the tickets were at a good price.

Well, we didn't just stop in Minneapolis, we had to change planes with an hour and a half lay over. Only a slight inconvenience, right? On our next plane our seats were located in the last row next to the bulkhead (wall). No window. We did, however, have a rather large and extremely loud engine located right where the window should have been (DC-9). Fortunately, we soon discovered that we were only going to Denver instead of Las Vegas, fool that I was. By the time I got to Denver, I had a terrific headache from the engine noise and vibration. No problem, the captain said we'll be on the ground for 30 minutes, and the stewardess said if we checked at the counter they could probably change our seats. Great! Good seats for the rest of the flight to Vegas. Went to find some aspirin for my headache. When we returned to our gate 20 minutes after disembarking, I saw our plane pull out. No problem, the clerk said they have another one going that way at 8:30 p.m. It was 12:30 at the time. After an exchange of words, (I had two years in the Marine Corps, the clerk couldn't compete with me on that one) they found us a flight leaving with only two and a half hour wait. Denver is pretty in the winter, at least that's what they say.

Alas, we arrived in Las Vegas only 10½ hours after leaving home. We were, of course, concerned about which of the three plans that we had flown on had our luggage. Our bags made the trip ahead of us. (They didn't have a headache in Denver). Someone did manage to run over one of the bags — that one that is now six days old.

Needless to say, my luck continued through our stay in Vegas. I dropped enough money that they won't have to have a state income tax for at least one more year.

Back to the airport in Las Vegas. My ticket, remember, says Las Vegas to O'Hare, right? Wrong! The clerk said Las Vegas to Minneapolis again, then to Rochester, Minnesota, change plans there, then to Chicago. Too late to change now, away we go.

About ten minutes into the flight our pilot mentioned that the air would be a little choppy for about sixty miles. Needless to say, it remained bumpy for the whole flight. We arrived in beautiful Minneapolis airport once again. While sitting there waiting for them to board for the next leg of our flight to

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GCS TRIP (cont'd.)

Rochester, we were told that we would be delayed for about thirty minutes while the maintenance tried to fix a broken hydraulic something or other. Just enough of a delay to miss our connecting flight from Rochester to O'Hare. No problem, they just happen to have another plane now boarding for CHicago, leaving in five minutes. We ran to the proper gate. (Approximate distance: 1/2 mile) We were told they had only two seats together on the whole plane, we took them. Fortunately, they were in the smoking section. Unfortunately, we still were not headed toward Chicago. The plane was never more than half full. Another slight inconvenience, next stop Central Wisconsin Airport in Wausau, then on to the city of Milwaukee.

We finally arrived at O'Hare Airport at 10:15 p.m. (we left Las Vegas at 1:30 p.m.), we missed our ground transportation home by a mere hour and fifteen minutes. Nowhere would our luggage be. I worried for nothing, apparently they fixed the plane in Minnesota, it made the connecting flight and arrived in Chicago on time, our luggage preceded us by an hour and a half. No problem, I just rented a car (another \$50.00 shot!) and drove the final leg home and arrived there only ten hours after leaving Las Vegas.

I realized that all my problems were not the fault of our travel agency. The airline we flew did very little to instill confidence either. My future arrangements will be made by myself, with an airline I choose to fly with, at a price I am willing to pay. My tickets for this ordeal were **only** \$332.00 each, which, of course, I have found out was not a bargain for a direct flight, much less the milk run we were on.

As a loyal G.C.S.A.A. member, I say let's support education, turfgrass research, our members, and let the travel agents fend for themselves.

P.S. The above information is true in every detail. The trip both ways totaled twenty and a half hours, five different planes, and in and out of airports nine times.

J. Michael Hart

GOOD TIMBER

The tree that never had to fight
For sun and sky and air and light;
That stood out in the open plain,
And always got its share of rain.
Never became a forest king,
But lived and died a scrubby thing.

The man who never had to toil
By hand or mind mid life's turmoil;
Who never had to win his share
Of sun and sky and light and air.
Never became a manly man,
But lived and died as he began.

Good timber does not grow in ease;
The stronger wind, the tougher trees.
The farther skies, the greater length.
The rougher storms, the greater strength.
By sun and cold, by rain and snows,
In tree or man good timber grows.

-Anonymous-

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